

TRUTH ABOUT CONDITION OF JEWS IN WARSAW UNDER GERMAN RULE

By HERMAN BERNSTEIN.
Editor of "The Day."

I WAS in London when the great Polish and Jewish center, Warsaw, fell into German hands. The British press naturally endeavored to minimize the importance and significance of the German victory. The newspapers even saw in the Russian retreat another brilliant strategic stroke by the Grand Duke Nicholas, who, like Gen. Kuropatkin in the Russo-Japanese war, showed a genius for "masterly retreats."

A few prominent Jews in England who knew that three years ago the Russian Government did not admit me to Warsaw, but stopped me at the frontier, referred to the incident, saying that now that Warsaw was in German hands I would have the opportunity to visit the great Jewish center and familiarize myself with the horrors that occurred there during the last few weeks of the Russian regime. I was also deeply interested in the life of the Jews under the new regime and the extent of relief required to meet the dire distress among the Jewish population.

Israel Zangwill, that brilliant Jewish leader and deep thinker and dreamer, said to me during my visit at his beautiful country home in East Preston:

"I could not go to Warsaw before. Now I can go there."

"Not yet," I answered. "As an Englishman you would be interested in Germany. But I as an American, who could not go to Warsaw when it was under Russian rule, can go there now when it is under German rule."

There is no city in Europe that I was more eager to visit this time than Warsaw, that great center of Jewish traditions which now finds itself amid new and strange conditions. But, strange as it may seem, the German military authorities, absolutely declined to grant my request for a permit to visit the Polish provinces occupied by the German forces.

I was well recommended in every country I visited. I carried letters of introduction from the American State Department and in every country the American Ambassadors were most generous and thoughtful in their efforts to lessen the discomforts and hardships connected with travel through Europe in these days of suspicion and madness everywhere.

I asked the German Foreign Office for a permit to visit Warsaw and other Polish Jewish centers. I stated frankly the purpose of my trip. I wanted to see what had happened to the Jewish people in these provinces before their occupation by the German troops and what the conditions were now under the new regime. I wanted to portray these things in the Jewish and English press of America and I also wanted to ascertain the extent of the relief needed so that I might acquaint the Jewish relief committees in America with the distress and the amount of the succor required.

An official of high standing in the Foreign Office assured me that he would do everything in his power to secure me the permit to go to the Polish provinces, but he warned me that I might meet with many inconveniences and disagreeable incidents.

"Americans are not at all popular in these days among the German military authorities," he said. "In fact they are hated very strongly on account of the ammunition question. You see, the soldier in the field, who feels that he is risking his life for his country, cannot be expected to be polite and act as a gentleman and restrain himself from giving expression to his feelings."

Problem of the Race in Poland Not Solved, Asserts Her-
man Bernstein--Gives Actual Instances of Persecu-
tion by Both Poles and Teutons

and shook hands with them. Then he asked for the American newspaperman; they advanced to him, but he did not shake their hands, nor did he greet them. He said to them bluntly and rudely:

"You had better tell America to stop sending ammunition to kill our soldiers. This is the only thing that is prolonging the war." And he turned away from them.

The German censor did not allow any of the American correspondents to cable this incident.

For fourteen days I waited in Berlin for a permit to go to Warsaw. Every day the Foreign Office assured me that I would get such a permit. Finally I was informed that the military authorities had absolutely declined to allow me to go to the Polish provinces under any circumstances. When I demanded to know the reason for this decision they declined to state it. They assured me that no representative of any neutral newspaper could get a permit to go to these provinces at the time I was in Germany.

A number of prominent German statesmen when they heard that the General Staff had refused to allow me to go to Warsaw remarked that it was a blunder, that it was a stupid act on the part of the military authorities. But during my stay in Germany I learned that with all the admirable system that Germany possesses, with all the unity that seems to permeate every effort in the fight of the nation for the Fatherland, the German Government is split into two antagonistic factions. The statesmen, the Foreign Office, are antagonized by the General Staff, by the military authorities, and as is usual in times of war, the military influence predominates. If the

as some enthusiastic pro-Germans are trying to make the world believe, already there has begun a campaign in influential German publications against the new "Jewish danger" threatening Germany from the millions of Jews in the newly acquired Polish provinces. Articles are appearing in the German press advocating that means shall be adopted to prevent the menace of a possible immigration of the Polish Jews to the German cities.

It is true that, owing to the sacrifices made by the German Jews, to the large number of Jewish volunteers in the German army, to the enormous financial aid given by the Jews of Germany in the hour of Germany's crisis, much of the anti-Jewish feeling may subside at the close of the war, for after all the common sufferings, hardships, risks and sacrifices of the men in the trenches must exercise an equalizing influence and work against bigoted racial or religious discrimination. And the heroism and self-sacrifice of the Jews in the armies are unquestioned.

But the new danger—the fear of the strange Jews they do not know, the fear that the Polish Jews might flock to the larger German centres—is already beginning to rob Germans of their sleep.

It is true that the German Government has given to the Jews in the newly acquired provinces one-third representation in the civil committees, one-third being Polish and one-third German. It matters little just now what the motives of the German Government are in this arrangement.

When Grand Duke Nicholas issued his well known manifesto to the Poles promising to make Poland an auton-

among the Poles the German Government by giving two-thirds representation to the Jews and the Germans in those provinces is now in a position to control these tendencies and check them.

But even under the new German regime the Poles are continuing their militant anti-Jewish policy.

Since I was not permitted to go to Warsaw to acquaint myself with the life of the Jews under German rule I made arrangements to secure the facts concerning their condition from various influential and authoritative sources. What I learned will explain in a measure the reason why the military authorities refused to grant me a permit to visit the newly acquired provinces.

During my stay in Berlin the news was published in America that in a proposed outline of Germany's terms for peace there was a clause demanding equal rights for the Jewish people. It seems that in Jewish quarters in America this attracted considerable attention, which was quite natural. But I was in Germany when this report was cabled from America to Germany. I spoke to a number of distinguished Jews and Gentiles concerning this demand for equal rights for Jews. If it was taken seriously in America, I cannot say that it was taken seriously in Germany.

There many people laughed at the naivete of the whole affair. It was admitted that anti-Semitism was perhaps diminished in Germany proper, but that Germany should insist upon the emancipation of the Jews at the peace congress in view of the new Jewish problem that may develop in

send these documents out of Germany. But I have succeeded in securing from Warsaw material which those who have visited Warsaw could not or would not get. I publish these facts in the hope that the German Government will end these Russian-Polish methods of anti-Jewish persecution in the Polish provinces under German rule.

I am giving herewith a series of facts, unembellished, illustrating the condition of the Jews in Warsaw during the first four weeks of the German rule there.

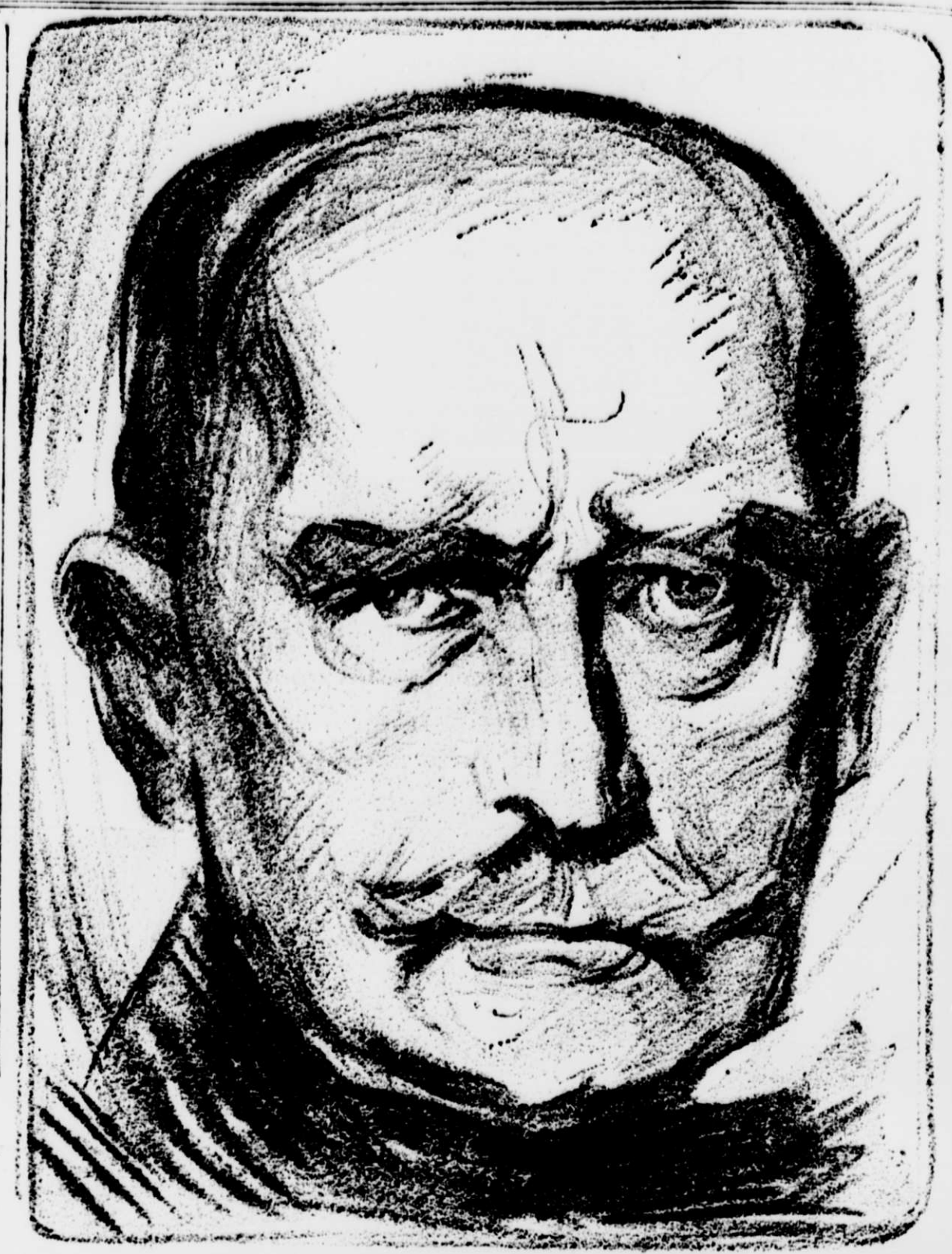
The following examples will show the treatment to which the Jews of Warsaw are subjected:

On Friday, August 13, Berek Pionski was passing through Bonifraterska strasse on his way to Pokorna. The street was thronged with people going in the direction of the Kowal station to view the German train. Pionski was about to join them when he noticed that the militia were dispersing the crowd, so he continued on his way to Pokorna.

Just then a sergeant seized him by the hand and asked for his pass. Fortunately Pionski had his pass and the sergeant took it from him. When he demanded it back the sergeant struck him, Pionski protested against this brutal treatment, but the sergeant shouted at the top of his voice:

"Come, hit this fellow!"

Whereupon a group of Poles threw themselves upon Pionski and began to beat and drag him along the street. The housekeeper at 2 Przebyska strasse, who witnessed this scene, asked the Poles why they were dragging Pionski "like a herding." But the soldiers only drove Pionski and the other Jews away. After tormenting Pionski for some time they released him, delivering him into the hands of another band of Poles, who took him to the police station. Pionski noticed that in the struggle one of his assail-



Gen. von Beseler, the military governor of Warsaw.

which they bought in the food section of the civil committee for only 15 rubles. The official only suggested that he file a charge against the soldier in court.

A soldier asked Schmuckermann to go with him to the station and report the addresses of such bakers. Schmuckermann complied. The Polish bakers continued selling flour at 35 rubles a sack undisturbed, as is confirmed by many persons who bought the flour.

On August 18, Schmuckermann went to a bakery in the Grzybowska strasse to buy rolls. There he met several soldiers who were trying to seize the baker's flour. He asked them why they took flour from the Jewish bakers and gave it to the Polish bakers, who sold it for 35 rubles a sack. In answer the soldier drew a revolver and a second called out, "Bells, does not need any flour. He can get along with straw."

The soldiers then tried to arrest Schmuckermann. Just then an officer came in and told Schmuckermann to go, explaining to his colleagues that Schmuckermann had protested because he was hungry and for that reason in a bad humor.

Schmuckermann returned home after this incident. His children were hungry and begged for bread, so he went to a bakery at 6 Marianska strasse, which belonged to a Jewish woman, Miriam Wolkowska. The woman explained to him that she had had bread, but a soldier had come with a Polish woman baker and taken it all.

Schmuckermann then went to the soldier and demanded his number, because he wished to report the incident at the station. But his answer from the soldier was, "Bells, straw is good enough for you." Schmuckermann then called a number of people together to witness how the soldier treated him. So the latter struck him several times with a club and dragged him to the station, where he was detained until a doctor and beaten badly.

When he cried for hunger he was told to eat straw. Finally he was released.

On August 17 a peasant was selling potatoes near the house in Lwowska strasse. No Jews were allowed to buy of him. When the peasant had only had a koretz of potatoes left a Jew of the name of Henoch approached the wagon and sought to buy potatoes for a neighbor whose husband was at the front. When the Poles caught sight of him they protested. But the peasant sold the Jew the potatoes, took 2 rubles from him and gave him a ruble change.

When Henoch was about to leave with his sack of potatoes a Polish woman came up to buy potatoes. Several Poles who stood near tore the sack away from Henoch and carried a soldier, who ordered Henoch to give

the potatoes to the Polish woman. As Henoch did not want to obey another soldier was summoned and together with Poles they beat the Jew. Henoch begged them to take him to the station, saying he would abide by the commissary's decision.

Meanwhile a sergeant came up. On learning what had happened he abused the peasant because he had sold his produce to a Jew and compelled Henoch to give the potatoes he had bought to the Polish woman. At the same time the Jew was forced to turn over his own sack too.

On Sunday, August 18, Israel Baskiew was standing in his store at 38 Leszka strasse, when a soldier and militiamen entered and ordered him to close his shop. He obeyed at once. A half

Continued on Tuesday Page.



Jews in the ghetto of Warsaw succored by German Red Cross. The baby on the lap of the Red Cross member is a founding which they adopted.

the Polish provinces was dismissed as more than improbable.

Then there reached me rumors about the distress of the Jews in Warsaw. Of course it was quite natural that the sudden change in the economic, industrial and political life of the people of the newly acquired provinces should paralyze all activities and plunge the population into a state of chaos and despair in the beginning. The Jews as well as the Poles of such centers as Warsaw suddenly found all their sources of income cut off, all their commercial and industrial intercourse with the rest of the world paralyzed. Their commercial relations with Russia were of course at an end and to compete with German industrial centers it was at once too early and too difficult.

There there was much dissatisfaction and more distress. The demand for labor was stopped and hundreds of thousands of people searched for work in vain. The Jewish population was confronted by starvation and by not too bright prospects in the immediate future.

But to this distress was added the intensified anti-Jewish policy of the Poles, who did not forget even in the days of their catastrophe and their own sufferings to persecute the Jews.

From the facts concerning the treatment of the Jews during the first month of the German occupation of Warsaw it will be seen that the boycott policy of the Poles against the Jews was still pursued, that Jews were shipwrecked, that acts of violence against Jews were committed, that the militia failed to punish Poles who urged the mob to molest the Jews, that goods were looted, that goods were requisitioned by the militia from Jews and given to Poles, that Jews wearing blue coats were not admitted to the market, that there was discrimination against Jews who came to buy food in the stores of the citizens' committee, that Polish militiamen attacked Jewish militiamen when these defended the Jews, that the courts tolerated the beating of Jews by the militia in certain instances.

These facts have never been told in the Jewish press, nor for that matter in the general press, for the simple reason that those who go to the Polish provinces must write only in praise of the new regime, or in addition to the truly important changes for the better they desire to tell also of the unfortunate occurrences and incidents, the remnants of the policy of cruelty and persecution by the Russian Government and the Polish anti-Semites, it is impossible for them to take or

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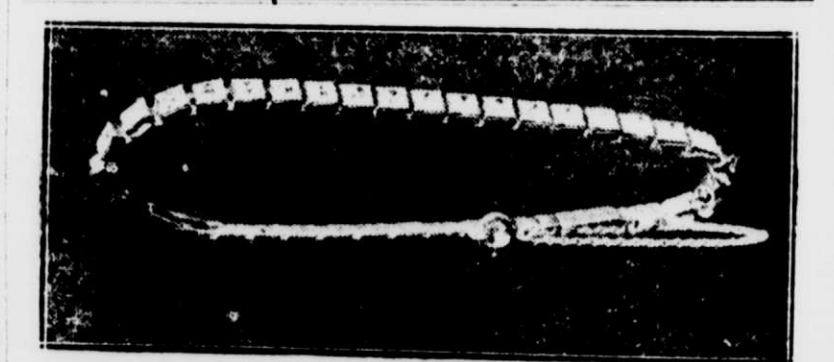
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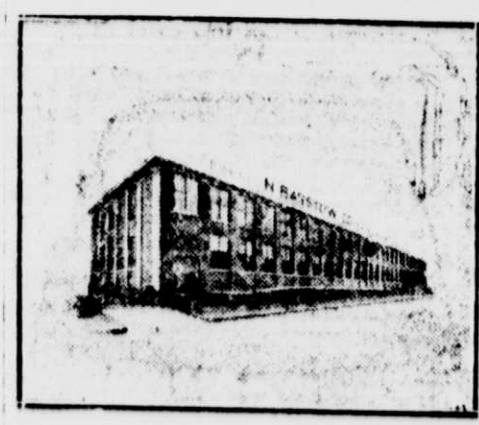
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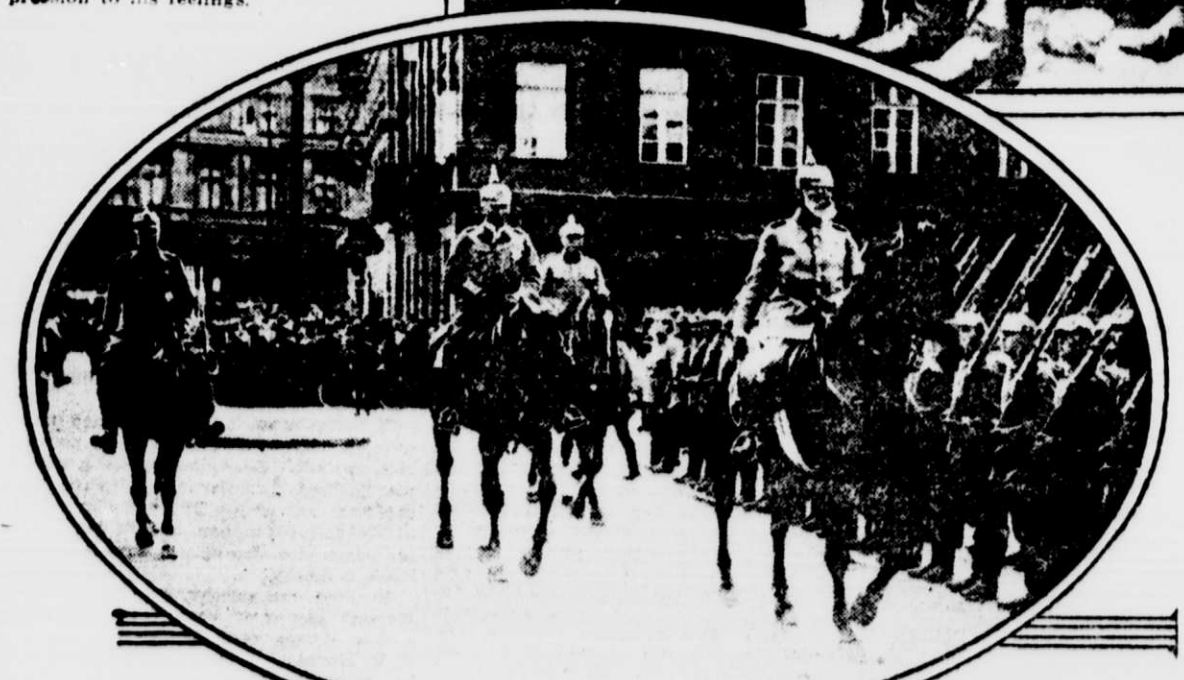
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The entry of Prince Leopold of Bavaria into Warsaw.

"The soldiers know that they are being killed by American ammunition, that their comrades have been killed or maimed for life, and naturally their anger against America and Americans is great. When a man feels that every day may be his last on the battlefield, in the cold and wet trenches, he cannot be expected to be a diplomat. I mention all this to you so that you may know in advance that something unpleasant may happen to you there."

I answered that I was quite willing to run the risk. Then he renewed his assurances that he would immediately take up the matter with the Governor-General of Warsaw, who must now be consulted with regard to any foreigner entering the Polish provinces.

In the afternoon of that day a number of American newspaper correspondents related to me the experiences of their visit to Warsaw a few days after its fall into German hands. Representatives of neutral newspapers were taken for a five day trip to Warsaw by the military authorities. They were dined and winced by the officers and the new German Chief of Police of Warsaw was also generous in his hospitality. They were taken slight scorn, they were guided by the officers to places of interest and were also presented to the new German Governor-General of Warsaw, Von Beseler.

He came out to greet the newspapermen. He asked for the representatives of the Swedish press, and then for the representatives of the Dutch press, and when the correspondents came forward he greeted them warmly

Foreign Office, for instance, is in favor of peace, the military heads are leading every effort to strengthen their power by intensifying themselves in their militarism and by stimulating the spirit of hatred and the talk of wiping the enemy off the face of the earth.

Thus it was in a small, yet characteristic, way that the Foreign Office was powerless to do what it wanted to do in my case. Of course, it seemed strange to me that the authorities had reached their decision so early, though they had allowed correspondents of other Jewish newspapers to visit the newly acquired provinces for a few days. It seemed all the stranger to me, since there is a feeling in German official spheres that all the Jews of America are sitting with Germany in this war. That there are Jews in America who are neutral or who are pro-American and pro-Jewish in their sympathies they could not understand.

There is not the slightest doubt that the fate of the Jews in the provinces occupied by Germany is much brighter and more hopeful than it was under the Russian regime of provocation, of cruelty, of militant anti-Semitism of plunder and pogroms. All these anti-Jewish methods will not be tolerated by Germany for the simple reason that in a country where system and order are the ideals such violations of the law are inconceivable. Yet, at the same time, I believe that it is more than wrong to deceive the Jewish people into believing that Germany will solve the Jewish problem at the close of this war.

Thus the Polish leaders everywhere pinned their hope to Russia as the Power that would restore to them their liberty and independence. Many of their "hate" written proclamations showing how the interests of the Polish people were bound up with the interests of Russia, and appeals have been published urging the Poles to avail themselves of their opportunity, and through their devotion to the Russian cause to secure their independence.

Henrich Bielowicz was one of the signers of such proclamations, which have become quite embarrassing now that the situation has changed and that the Grand Duke Nicholas, who had promised autonomy to Poland, has himself been driven from Poland by the German forces.

To curb this Russophile influence